

number of first-time jobless claims has fallen 6.5 percent, while the number of continuing claims is down 8 percent. Jobs were created in 48 States between March, 2005, and March, 2006, while jobless rates were down in 43 States.

Madam Speaker, the good economic news is flowing in like a river, and it will continue as long as we pursue Republican pro-growth tax policies. And as hard as Democrats try, they just can't deny that.

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call on Congress to address our Nation's health care crisis without further delay. Nearly 46 million Americans live without health insurance every day. In my State, more than 1.4 million people, that is one in five North Carolinians under the age of 65, do not have health insurance.

This is not just a policy debate; it is a challenge to our Nation. If we cannot develop a means to deliver affordable health care to everyone, we are failing in providing the most basic of protection to our citizens.

I think the key to a strong community is to have healthy individuals and families. We need everyone, labor, business, health care professionals, seniors and others, working together to develop solutions to make it work.

This Congress must pass legislation that provides adequate reimbursement rates for medical providers, that helps small businesses and the self-employed to have affordable health care insurance, and that provides our community health centers with the funding that they need. We must defeat proposed budget cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that will hurt American families.

We must all keep fighting until affordable quality health care is no longer a privilege for some but the right of all.

ECONOMIC GOOD NEWS CONTINUES

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, another month has passed and good economic news continues to roll in. Last month, the U.S. economy added 211,000 jobs. That marks 31 consecutive months of job growth. Thirty-one straight months. The unemployment rate is now 4.7 percent. Thirty-one months of small and large businesses expanding, hiring, and investing.

And Americans know that things look bright. So what do they do? They take that confidence and they invest. On Tuesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at a 6-year high.

America's economy is thriving, Madam Speaker, across the board.

Homeownership is up, the number of minority owned businesses is up, and the job market for today's college graduates is the best it has been in over 5 years. These numbers don't lie, and they are very clear to see. The American economy is alive and well.

Madam Speaker, this is good news. Americans know this, and I encourage my colleagues to recognize this as well.

□ 1015

KEEP ILLEGAL DRUGS ILLEGAL

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, for the third day in a row I planned to come to the floor of Congress and strongly criticize the Mexican Government for voting for a new law to legalize drugs. For the past 2 days, I pointed out that as a result of this pathetic new law, millions of American young people who travel to Mexico for summer vacation would now legally be able to use cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and marijuana.

When President Fox announced Tuesday he was going to sign this new drug legalization law, I came to the House floor and asked: Who is advising this guy, Courtney Love?

Well, a miracle happened last night. President Fox reversed course and announced that he would not sign the law, effectively vetoing and killing the legislation. He said he was sensitive to the opinions of those who oppose legalizing drugs and he would make it absolutely clear that the possession and use of drugs in Mexico will remain a criminal offense. Bravo, President Fox. I applaud your commonsense decision and your willingness to listen to our concerns. It is a positive step forward for U.S.-Mexico relations.

BUSH ECONOMIC POLICIES

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, last week's economic news underscored major flaws with the Bush economic policies. The economy is growing and productivity is high, but the benefits of growth are showing up in the bottom lines of companies, not in the paychecks of American workers.

Last Friday, while the Commerce Department reported a rebound in GDP from a weak fourth quarter, the Labor Department reported that a key measure of the compensation paid to workers failed to keep up with increases in the cost of living. The typical family is seeing its economy squeezed by rising costs of gasoline, health care, and college educations.

The President and his colleagues on the other side of the aisle are more interested in fiscal policies that worsen

the budget deficit than in addressing the real economic challenges that are facing America's working families.

LONE STAR VOICE ON IMMIGRATION

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, a high school senior in Texas writes about the illegal entry into the United States. She says, "I am a senior in the Klein School District. I am also the daughter of an immigrant family. I have the highest regard for the government and the rules placed before those who want to share this American dream. I see my family struggling each day to be sure to be by the books by following the limits and regulations set by the government. Unfortunately, there are others who are not.

"I can relate to those who want to be here, but when you allow these illegals to continue to cross the borders, there is a stereotype that is placed on the rest of us who diligently strive to follow the law. I know it is possible to come to the United States legally, and I know that it is difficult, but we need to tighten the borders.

"We all know there are many good and decent people who have a desire to work in the United States, but what about those who are mingling with the good people, bringing with them drugs and coming with a desire to do harm? There are many murders, rapes and vandalisms that will never be solved because many of those responsible return to their homeland. Protect me, my family and the good people of Texas by strengthening the Border Patrol. Also, be more stringent on the INS to be vigilant in maintaining order in the influx of outsiders that are coming to this country."

Madam Speaker, this high school senior has it right. Secure the borders or America will suffer. And that's just the way it is.

REPUBLICANS OFFER NO REAL ENERGY SOLUTION

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, Washington Republicans realize they have a credibility problem with the American people when it comes to their cozy relationships with the oil industry.

For 5 years now, President Bush has stacked his administration with energy executives. Shortly after he took office, Newsweek commented that "not since the rise of the railroads more than a century ago has a single industry placed so many foot soldiers at the top of the new administration."

Two-thirds of the Department of Energy and its transition team worked for the energy industry, including

Enron's Ken Lay, who is now on trial for manipulating energy markets. It is no wonder that the Nation's three largest petroleum companies, ExxonMobil, Chevron and Conoco Phillips, posted combined quarter profits of almost \$16 billion last week.

Rather than really address price gouging or the outrageous tax breaks that these companies continue to receive, House Republicans offer more of the same failed policies that have not worked for 5 years.

Madam Speaker, it is time Republicans realize that these companies are gouging the consumer. It is time that we pass the tough Democratic price gouging bill consumers deserve, no less. Price gouging is wrong. It's wrong, it's wrong, it's wrong.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4954.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

SECURITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EVERY PORT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 789 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 4954.

□ 1020

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 4954) to improve maritime and cargo security through enhanced layered defenses, and for other purposes, with Mrs. CAPITO in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 1 hour, with 40 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Homeland Security, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes, and the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

At the outset before we begin this debate, which will be a very positive debate, let me express my thanks to the ranking member, Mr. THOMPSON, for the tremendous cooperation he has given throughout deliberations on this bill, and also to the ranking member, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ, and to Ms. HARMAN for working so closely with all the Members, especially Chairman DAN LUNGREN who is the prime sponsor of this legislation.

I also want to mention other Members such as Chairman REICHERT and the ranking member, Mr. PASCRELL, for the important amendments that they introduced during the committee markup which have made this a very significant bill.

Madam Chairman, on September 11 all of us pledged that we would do all we could to prevent another terrorist attack from occurring in this country. One of the areas where we are most vulnerable is our ports. There are 11 million containers that come into our ports every year from foreign countries. Much progress has been made since September 11 in protecting our ports and improving the inspection process, the screening process, the scanning process; but the reality is that more has to be done.

I strongly believe that the SAFE Ports Act is a major step in the direction of giving us that level of protection that we need. For instance, it provides \$400 million a year in risk-based funding for a dedicated port security grant program.

It mandates the deployment of radiation portal monitors which will cover 98 percent of the containers entering our country and then going out into the country.

It mandates implementation of the TWIC identity cards, and it sets up port training between the employees at the ports and first responders. It also requires more cargo data to be given to improve our automated targeting system.

And as far as the Container Security Initiative, CSI, it mandates that the Secretary of Homeland Security will not allow any container to be loaded onto a ship overseas unless that container is inspected at our request. In the past, we have had a number of countries that refused to make these inspections. There have been 1,000 containers that have entered this country unexamined, uninspected because the overseas ports would not carry out the inspection. In the future, that will not be allowed to happen.

Also, we require DHS to continually evaluate emerging radioactive detection and imaging technology. We also increase the number of inspectors by 1,200. All of these are part of the layered response and the layered system of defense that we need to significantly and dramatically upgrade the level of protection in our ports.

This is a bill which I believe warrants the support of the entire House. It passed out of the subcommittee unani-

mously, and it passed out of the full committee by a vote of 29-0, and I will be urging its adoption today.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, first, I would like to thank Chairman KING and Chairman LUNGREN for working with me and other members on the committee to produce the bill before us today.

I especially want to commend my colleagues, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ and Ms. HARMAN, for their hard work on this bill and on port security in general. Many provisions in this bill came from legislation they have introduced over the last 2 years, and for that I thank them. They have been leaders on this issue, and we need to give them credit before we discuss the full ramifications of this bill.

Madam Chairman, this bill represents an important step toward improving our port security, but it is only a step. We need to do more to get it right. I could talk about the good things in the bill; but with this limited time, I would like to focus on what is not in the bill. These are the things that are going to keep us up at night after today's votes are over.

Yesterday during Rules, it was said by folks on the other side that we need to look at where threats exist and do something that makes us a little safer. "A little safer" is simply not good enough after 9/11, and the threats left undone by this bill are significant.

I worry that unsecured nuclear materials, and there is a lot of that wandering around the Russian countryside, will be shipped here hidden in a cargo container that sails into Miami, New York, Houston, New Orleans, Los Angeles or Oakland. From there, the cargo container will be put on a train or truck headed to places like Chicago, St. Louis, Austin, Milwaukee, or Detroit. As the train or truck passes by our schools, homes, or who knows what else, what is going to stop a terrorist from detonating it. If this happens, what will my colleagues across the aisle recommend Congress tell Americans, we didn't know it would happen?

After 9/11 when terrorists surprised us by using our own airplanes against us, we cannot say we did not expect the unexpected. We must do better. It is our job to prevent disaster from happening, not react after the fact. We had the opportunity to do that today.

We could have voted on my amendment increasing the number of Customs and Border Patrol officers at our ports, but the amendment was not allowed on the floor. All the talk on border and port security means little if we do not have the boots on the ground to check what is coming into our Nation before it arrives here or before it leaves a foreign port.

And we could have ensured that more than the 5 percent of our cargo entering the country is scanned by voting on